

**Education Governance Responses  
Barre Meeting (4/3/07) – Spaulding High School Library**

18 Attendees (facilitated by George Appenzeller)

**Question #1: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the present education governance system in your community?:**

**Advantages**

Each school can address its unique needs  
Shared curriculum development  
Shared administrative services/reduces cost  
Shared resources  
Planning (efficient coordination)  
Close-proximity of schools and communities  
Community pride  
Autonomy of each district. Citizens feel connected and can be heard.  
Pride of ownership. School is the center of the community.  
Closer to kids and closer to community. More diverse school board members  
More representation/people  
Ultimate local control

**Disadvantages**

Conflicts, rivalry, competition among boards  
Many meetings for one superintendent  
Cumbersome decision-making process  
Too many meetings  
Resources K12 not centralized  
Inefficiency in facility and school structure  
“turf” issues  
Disparate communities in one su  
Too many chiefs  
Superintendent burn out  
Inconsistent curriculum, calendars \$ expectations  
Students come to with different backgrounds  
Different from businesses – may be a disconnect  
Hard to know from the outside who’s in charge  
Hard to get school board members  
Role of superintendent/staff - not doable – too many bosses; too many boards  
Local control thwarts broader interests  
Board relations difficult  
Too many bargaining units  
Lack continuity of curriculum  
Difficult to budget  
Difficult finding consensus

**Question #2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the school district model suggested by Commissioner Cate in his White Paper?**

**Advantages**

Financial advantages  
Common educational standards and curriculum  
Free up superintendent for education matters  
Less chaotic  
More “professional” school board members  
Coordination and collaboration of curriculum K-12  
Manageable system for administrator to be an educational leader  
Focus is on the big picture  
Economic “plus” for small schools  
Shared responsibilities for all schools by all board and community members  
Greater opportunities for all students  
Financial advantage in centralized purchasing  
Common contracts, calendar  
Staffing efficiencies  
Streamlines  
Line of control well defined  
Opportunity for coherent planning  
Calendar and negotiations simplified  
Consolidating services/purchases  
Impact on budgets  
Consolidating some schools    more benefits to students    opportunities

**Disadvantages**

Harder to get citizen involvement  
Fewer educational models  
Vote will have less impact  
School board less connected to schools  
Lose sense of community  
Citizens might hold back  
Board may be politicized  
Cost out of control  
Perception of loss of local control  
Loss of intense focus on each school  
Possible disproportionate representation (H.S. vs. elementary schools)  
Perceived loss of local control  
Loss of connection to administration and board by both community and staff  
Counter to “Vermont” identity    larger isn’t necessarily better  
Less representation/voices from community  
Resistance to change/communities  
Policy and contractual changes    impact on budgets

**Debrief Comments:**

Focus on the best interests of the kids  
Avoid administrative disconnect from daily operation of school (no high-rise bureaucracy)  
Preserve sense of uniqueness of each community  
Expansion of public/private model  
Secondary/post-secondary blending  
Blending of regular/technical education programs  
Independence of commissioner  
Single statewide district  
K-16 (or beyond) system  
Opportunities options for careers  
Fund the optimal school  
Criteria for school board members  
Criteria for board roles/defined  
Parent ombudsman  
State contract  
Outstanding teacher awards  
K-12 and post secondary ed. blend  
Bus times already long – how long if close small schools?  
People aren't fearing change as expected  
Options allow towns to save small schools  
Unanimity in the room  
Sensitivity essential in transitions/consolidations to community  
If move to another model, big  
Sell will be needed  
Barre having these conversations; may be different in rural areas of where there are small schools they fear will close  
Underlying tension between escalating cost and Vermont identity/values  
Incentives for consolidation  
Criteria for board members is an interesting idea  
Good idea for Barre – how do we move on this? State statute does not make hard to do  
Barre model – low per pupil cost